TREASURES
IN THE
DACCA MUSEUM

PART ONE

SCULPTURES & ARCHITECTURAL PIECES

ENAMUL HAQUE

TREASURES

IN THE

DACCA MUSEUM

PART ONE

SCULPTURES & ARCHITECTURAL PIECES

By

ENAMUL HAQUE, M.A.,

ASSISTANT CURATOR

DACCA MUSEUM

DACCA MUSEUM

DACCA-2, EAST PAKISTAN

1 9 6 3

Treasures in the Dacca Museum Series

Price : Rs. 2·00

Published by the author on behalf of the Dacca Museum.

PREFACE

An illustrated Guide to the collections of Dacca Museum has long been a desideratum with the visitors to the Museum. This booklet is neither an exhaustive nor a comprehensive catalogue of the large collection of materials exhibited and stored in the Museum but is a short brochure introducing the sculptures and architectural pieces only. Attempts have been made to focus attention to the comparatively important and interesting exhibits with photographs and short description. I have occasionally taken the help of published sources, proper mention of which I deliberately omit, for, this brochure is primarily meant for the layman. However, it may also be of some use to the people who are devoted to the study of the subject.

Started in 1913 A. D. this non-government public Museum is in the 50th year of its existence. It is housed in the now-renovated and extended Baradari built in 1765 A.D. of the Naib-Nazim of Dacca. Its sources of income are annual grants from the University of Dacca, Government of East Pakistan and Municipality of Dacca, which together make less than Rs. 10000/- a year. Since Independence the Museum is being looked after by one part-time Curator. Only last year a full-time Assistant Curator has been appointed.

It may be due to this situation that most of the objects are yet to be identified, catalogued and labelled. Moreover, the lack of space has reached an acute stage.

Inspite of the fact that it did not receive as much patronage as was expected from the Government, Dacca Museum has attained a unique position in regard to its rich collections. This Museum is specially rich in Buddhist and Brahmanical sculptures ranging mainly from the 10th to 13th century A.D., all from East Pakistan ; terracotta plaques of 8th century A.D., from Paharpur, Sabhar and other places ; fine wooden sculptures of 10th century A.D., from Vikramapur ; manuscripts with illustrations in polychrome and a series of manuscript cover paintings, ranging from 15th to 18th century A.D., depicting scenes from the Mahabharata, Krishna-Lila, etc. ; another series of paintings showing details of *Id* and *Muharrum* processicns in the decadent style of late 18th and early 19th century A.D., executed at Dacca ; Mughal Miniatures ; modern paintings of East Pakistani artists ; numerous Sanskrit copper plates ; *Badshahi Sanads* ; Arabic & Persian inscriptions of mosques and tombs ; silver and copper works of 17th-19th century A.D. ; Chinese Porcelain jars and pots of 17th century A.D.: panoramic models of village and urban communities and rich and rare collection of textiles of Maharaja of Dinajpur. Dacca Museum can claim to have one of the richest coin collections in the country, and its collection of arms and weapons is possibly the best in the Sub-continent. The Museum has a library of about 5000 volumes. It is specially rich in maps and books on ancient and mediaeval Bengal.

It is high time that somcthing is done immediately, to preserve this immense treasure, keeping in view that Dacca has become the seat of two capitals and is moving fast towards the category of a million - citizen metropolis.

To the Bureau of National Reconstruction, Government

of East Pakistan, very grateful thanks are due for generously subsidizing the publication of this brochure.

Thanks are also due to my teacher, Mr. S. C. Bhattacharyya of the Department of History, University of Dacca, for reading proof and suggesting many an improvement.

15. 8. 1963.
Dacca Museum.

ENAMUL HAQUE

Dacca Museum

TREASURES IN THE DACCA MUSEUM

PART ONE

Sculptures & Architectural Pieces

SCULPTURES

The first thing that would impress the visitors to the Dacca Museum is the large collection of Buddhist and Brahmanical sculptures, depicting almost in sequences the evolution of Bengal school of art of the historic periods. It is particularly rich in sculptures of the Bengali-speaking area now forming East Pakistan, which may conveniently be fitted within the bounds of the ancient realms of *Varendra*, *Vanga* and *Samatata*. At different times, parts or whole of this area experienced the rule of the Imperial Mauryas or Guptas or of the Independent rulers of the Khadga, Pala, Chandra, Sena, Varmman & Deva dynasties. Centres of administrative, educational, or religious activities came up and hence the existence of Paundravardhana (Mahasthan, Dt. Bogra), Paharpur (Dt. Rajshahi), Vikramapur (Dt. Dacca), Sabhar (Dt. Dacca), Mainamati (Dt. Comilla) and such other historically known sites. Most of the images in Dacca Museum are from these sites. But it must be said that the whole collection is only a very small fraction of the images that actually survive in and around these areas.

The majority of the images that are preserved in the Museum belong to the last period of the life-span of Bengal Sculpture, i.e. the period from about 1000 to 1200 A. D. But of course a sizeable number of sculptures may be dated from the

Buddha from Mahasthan, Bogra.

Dhyani Buddha from Vikramapur, Dacca.

6th century A. D. through the 18th century A. D. Most of these images are carved from a kind of "fine-grained and rather hard" black basalt or chlorite stone, the nearest source of which can be located in the Rajmahal hills of Bihar. The other varieties of stone used are the greyish-black stone, ordinary grey or greenish sand-stone, granite & marble. The Museum has also a large collection of sculptures made of wood, metal and clay showing the dexterity of Bengal artists.

BUDDHIST IMAGES

The Buddhist images preserved in Dacca Museum are significant in number and uniqueness. The neighbouring area being the cradle of several powerful Buddhist dynasties and the consequent patronage of art and culture by the royal masters, this so-called last resort of Buddhism in the Sub-continent witnessed the development of varieties of Buddhist images, the bulk of which show 'local adaptations' to such on extent that at this distance of time it becomes considerably difficult to identify them correctly according to the authoritative *sadhanamalas*. However, one can find to one's delight the different Buddhist divinities with varied postures in the collection of the Museum particularly those of the Vajrasattva, Avalokitesvara or Lokanatha, Manju-Sri, Gautama Buddha, Dhyani Buddha, Maitreya Buddha, Jambhala, Heruka, Pindola, Prajnaparamita, Marichi, Vajra Tara, Syama Tara, Sitatapatra, Mahapratisara, Hariti etc.

The earliest Buddhist image in the Museum is that of a standing Buddha, 14½" X 6½", of greyish sand-stone from Mahasthan, Bogra (page 8). This 6th century A.D. Buddha stands on a *Visvapadma*. The god holds one end of the diaphanous clothing or *sanghati* with his left hand, the *sanghati* hanging down upto

Heruka from Comilla.

Lokanatha from Vikramapur, Dacca.

Bodhisatva Manju-Sri from Vikramapur, Dacca.

his ankle, and the right hand is in *varada mudra*. The head has a conical *usnisa* and spiral knots. A halo, encircled with a pair of raised band, is flanked at the top by two Vidyadharas. A seated devotee with folded hands is seen on the proper right of the god.

One of the remarkable Buddhist images in stone is a Dhyani Buddha, 40″ X 21″, from Vikramapur, Dacca (page 9). The image has a short inscription on the pedestal in the script of the 10-11th century A.D. in bold and clear-cut letters. The Buddha sits on a full-blown lotus in the *vajrasana* and his two hands are in the *bhumi-sparsa mudra*. The lobes of his ears almost touch the necks. The Buddha is flanked on either side by two male figures, each holding a lotus in his left hand. The right hand of the figure on the right is in the *abhaya mudra*, while the figure on the left appears to be performing *arati* or *bandana* by his right hand. Below the seat of the Buddha, a powerful elephant crouches on its haunches and is flanked by two frisking lions. The figure of Vajradhara appears on the proper left-bottom corner. A trefoil arch resting on two solid pillars surmounted by a terraced temple ending in a prominent *amalaka* is depicted above the head of the Buddha. The foliage of an *asvathva* tree is depicted above the *amalaka*. A *kirtimukha* appears on the apex of the arch. The five Dhyani Buddhas with Akshobhya in the middle, appear on the ends of the terraces of the temple.

Another interesting Buddhist image in stone is that of a life size Heruka from Comilla district (page 11). Such images are extremely rare. This image is also of black chlorite measuring 65″ X 33½″. The god stands on the left leg, bent in the dancing attitude. The right leg is raised to the thigh of the left leg. The god

Sitatapatra from Comilla.

Bodhisatva Avalokitesvara from Sylhet.

is grinning horribly and wears a garland of 17 skulls. The right hand is upraised as if to hurl the *vajra*, which however is broken away and lost. The left hand carries the *khatvanga* with the banner, to the flowing ends of which two small bells are tied. The image of the Dhyani Buddha Akshobhya appear on the blazing tiara.

The wooden image of Lokanatha (page 12), 47″ X 16″, is of excellent workmanship. This 10th century A.D. image was collected from Vikramapur, Dacca. The right arm of the deity is gone, as well as both the legs, upto half of the thighs. The legs were fashioned out of a separate piece of wood and attached to the stumps of the thighs. The god sits in *lalitasana* with the weight of the body thrown on the left arm placed on the seat. Below the lotus seat of the god, two miniature figures are represented. The one to the proper right is the Vajrapani and the other to the left is probably a Manju-Sri. The graceful nature of the entire composition shows the excellence of Bengal art of the particular period.

Another fine wooden image of 10th century A.D. *Bodhisatva* Manju-Sri, 57½″X16½″, was also collected from Vikramapur, Dacca (page 13). The spire of a *Rekha* temple in Orissan style resting on a trefoil arch is visible on the top. The god with his blessed soft smile and half closed eyes is charming to the beholder.

The master specimens of Buddhist work in bronze are those of Sitatapatra, Vajra Tara in *mandala* and *Bodhisatva* Avalokitesvara. The bronze Sitatapatra (page 15) of 6th century A.D., 20″ X 11″, found in Comilla, has a parasol over the head of the goddess. The goddess with her eight hands sits with one leg pendant, resting over a lotus. The expression on the face of the goddess

Vajra Tara in *mandala* from Majbari, Faridpur.

(a) Manjuśrī from Jaikrati, Dacca.

(b) Bhūmisparśa Buddha from Jaigaon.

is undeniably very pleasant. Some of the hands of the goddess have suffered decay with age.

The bronze image of the 8th century A.D. *Bodhisatva* Avalokitesvara, 32" X 11", was discovered in Sylhet (page 16). The god stands on a lotus. He has a lotus with a long stalk in his left hand and he blesses mankind with his right hand. His clothing reaches down to the ankle and locks of wavy hair fall on his shoulders. Amitabha in miniature is represented on his chest.

The art of metal-casting appears to have attained a degree of currency and excellence, almost equal to that of stone-carving. The mechanical skill of the caster reached its height during the period just preceding the advent of the Muslims as may be seen from the unique image of the 11th century A.D. Vajra-Tara in *mandala* (page 18) within a full-blown lotus with moveable petals obtained from Majbari, Faridpur, 7" in height.

Terracotta plaques which represent an important phase of plastic art specially in this deltaic area where stone is not abundant are shown in the Museum by selected pieces from Paharpur, Vikramapur and Sabhar. It may be noted that the terracotta art has found the most favourable atmosphere for development in this riverine plain abounding in soft clay soil but almost devoid of rocks and mountains. Even the entire decoration of a temple or monument may in some cases be of plaques in clay as for instance in the temple at Kantanagar, Dinajpur.

However, the Museum has a very rich collection of the terracotta plaques (page 22) that once used to decorate the stupendous Buddhist shrine at Paharpur built in 7th-8th century A.D. Composite animals and semi-divine and semi-human figures are depicted with as much interest as is evident in the various movements

Syama Tara from Sukhavaspur, Dacca.

(a) Terracotta plaque from Paharpur, Rajshahi.

(b) Terracotta plaque from Sabhar, Dacca.

associated with different occupations of daily life. In fact every conceivable subject of ordinary human life finds its place on these plaques, the essential nature of which is wholly popular. A number of 12th century terracotta plaques from Sabhar (page 22), with stamped figures of Buddha in different postures within circular niches are also preserved in the Museum.

BRAHMANICAL IMAGES

Of the sculptures preserved in the Dacca Museum the Brahmanical images form the largest collection and of these the Vishnuite groups of icons are by far the most numerous. The commonest form of Vishnu images in the Museum belongs to the variety known as Trivikrama. The attributes in its lower and upper left and upper and lower right hands are respectively conch-shell (*sankha*), wheel (*chakra*), mace (*gada*) and lotus (*padma*).

The earliest Vishnu image in the Museum is the sculpture of Vishnu of greyish black stone, 48″ X 18″, from Khiar-Mahmudpur, Dinajpur (page 25). This elegantly carved *samapada-sthanaka* Vishnu stands on an inverted lotus. The face of the deity is slightly mutilated. The four-armed central figure is partly in round and partly in relief, the head, shoulders and the hands resting on the background of a *prabhavali* ; right and left back hands connected respectively with the knob of the *gada*, (shown also as Gada-devi in *tribhanga* pose with a *chowri* in her left hand) and the rim of the *chakra* (also depicted as a Chakra-purusha in *tribhanga* pose with a *chowri* in his right hand). Its front left hand holds a conch-shell and in the front right a lotus bud could be recognised with a little difficulty. Its sparse ornaments consist of high *kirita-mukuta*, *angada*, *keyura*, *kundalas*, *hara*, *yajnopavita* and *vaijayantimala*. The donor couple in kneeling

Trivikrama Vishnu from Betka, Dacca.

Vishnu from Khiarmahmudpur, Dinajpur.

posture with folded hands can be seen on the pedestal on either side of the god. The plainness of the *prabhavali*, the tender modelling of heavy bodily forms, a boldness of composition in solid masses, the severe simplicity and the absence of Vidyadhara, or any of the usual consorts of Vishnu—all indicate a comparatively early date, and the image can, with some amount of confidence, be referred to pre-Pala times, possibly early 8th century A.D.

Dacca Museum has also a rare *Dhyanasana* or seated four-armed Vishnu of 11-12th century A.D. carved in the centre of an wooden capital (page 54) found at Sonarang, Dacca.

Image illustrating some of the ten incarnatory forms of Vishnu have been well preserved in the Museum, such as, the Varaha (Boar), Vamana (Dwarf) and Narasimha (Man-lion) *avataras*. Of particular interest among these are the two varieties of Vamana in the Museum, both of 11th century A.D. In the usual one from Joradeul, Dacca (page 27), 36"X18", the central figure is shown with one foot raised heavenwards, above which is seated the four-armed Brahma ; just to the proper left of its right leg planted firmly on the lotus-pedestal is carved the scene of the grant by the demon king Bali to the Vamana god while the worshipping couple is placed on the pedestal below. The unique Vamana from Purapara, Dacca (page 27), 39" X 19", is also four-armed and is represented as a pot-bellied corpulent person with an umbrella in high relief at the top. The god is accompanied on either side by Lakshmi & Sarasvati.

An interesting terracotta cone, 5" in height, from Sabhar, Dacca, of c 11th century A.D., is remarkable indeed (pages 30 & 31). This is a heavily decorated piece, depicting Krishna and the milk-maids dancing in the *Rasa-mandala*. The central figure is that of Krishna

(a) Vamana from Jora-deul, Dacca.

(b) Vamana from Purapara, Dacca.

Garuda from Vikramapur, Dacca.

playing on the flute in *tribhanga* pose. His cloth does not come below the knee, and he wears heavy ear-rings and ornaments and is flanked on either side by two milk-maids who listen to his music enraptured and with folded hands. The *mandala* is complete with the figures of four more milk-maids, who dance in pairs interlocking each other in close embrace. The arms and the wrists of the maids are covered by profuse ornaments and their *saris* and *kanchulis* are heavily patterned.

Apart from these images, mention may be made of some unique sculptures of Vishnuite association. Dacca Museum has several images of Garuda, the bird-vehicle of Vishnu, including an wooden one, 20″ X 10″, of 10th century A.D. from Raghurampur, Dacca. There is an interesting double-sided stone-made Garuda, 30″ high, from Vikramapur, Dacca (page 28). A number of Vishnu-patta of considerable antiquity are also in the collection.

The blackstone image of Sarasvati (page 33) from Vajrayogini, Dacca, 23″ X 11″, in the collection of Dacca Museum is the finest specimen so far known of the goddess. Stylistically it can be taken to be of 11th century A.D. The goddess has four hands. Her front hands play on the Lyre. The back right hand holds the Rosary and in the back left hand is a Book. The goddess sits on a *Visvapadma* with her right leg pendant, the foot resting on a lotus. Some elaborate coils of lotus stalks are carved below. Swan, the vehicle of the goddess, appears inside the extreme right coil. A devotee with folded hands, is depicted in the extreme left coil. A nicely carved braid of tangled locks can be seen on the left side of her head.

Next to the images of Vishnu the images of Surya or Sun-god are the most numerous in the Dacca Museum. The images

(a) Krishna playing on flute from Sabhar, Dacca.

(b) Do.
The milkmaid to his left.

(a) Do.
The milkmaid to his right.

(b) Do.
A pair of milkmaids dancing.

of Surya or Sun-god preserved in the Museum are more or less alike in their essential features, differing only in minor details. Most of them can be dated from 10th to 12th century A.D. A typical Sun-god stands erect on a lotus pedestal, holding in his two hands two full-blown lotuses which rise just above the shoulders. His head is surrounded by a halo and his body is covered by armour. His waist is encircled by an ornamental girdle and a rolled scarf passess over his waist-cloth. His feet and part of his leg are covered by high boots. Just in front of the god stands a miniature female figure, in front of which is represented the legless Aruna, the charioteer of the Sun, who holds a whip in his right hand and the reins of the horses beneath in his left hand. Seven horses in high relief draw the chariot which moves on a single wheel. To the right of the Sun-god, a lady stands with a fly-whisk or with a lotus in her right hand and to her right is figured a pot-bellied corpulent man with beard carrying pen and ink-stand in his hands. Further to the right, a female figure is represented shooting arrows. To the left of the god are carved three similar figures. but the male one has no beard and holds either a staff or a sword in one of his hands. All these figures except the two females shooting arrows at the edges, wear boots like the Sun-god. Eleven miniature figures, exactly like the Sun-god, are some times represented near the edges of the *prabhavali*, generally 5 on each side of the god and one over his head. The god is often ornamented at the top with either a *kirtimukha* or a parasol and the centaur-upon-elephant design is exhibited on the two perpendicular sides of the god, while above these are a pair of Vidyadharas.

Associated with the Surya is his son Revanta and the Museum has several unique pieces of the same. The most

Sarasvati from Vajrayogini, Dacca.

Surya from Kulkudi, Faridpur.

interesting of them is the small bronze Revanta of 10th century A.D., 8¼″ in height, from Vajrayogini, Dacca (page 36). Revanta rides on a horse with a conical crown on his head, from beneath which curls flow down to the shoulders. He holds a cup in his right hand and the left hand is in the attitude of controlling the reins. The legs of Revanta are covered by high boots. Four companions are depicted on the piece, a pair in front of the deity and a second pair on his back. Of the figures in front, the one on proper left is broken away and lost. The one on proper right carries a sword and a buckler in his two hands. The figure on proper right at the back is a female figure carrying a lotus-bud in her right hand and something of the shape of a manuscript in her left. The figure on proper left at the back is a male and he holds with both of his hands the long butt of a parasol which tops the figure and is held over the head of the deity. A dog is placed on either side of the horse while between the two front hoofs of the horse, a miniature bear is placed. A devotee is placed in a kneeling posture in front at the extreme proper right bottom. There is a short votive inscription in two lines on the back of the image.

Dacca Museum has both phallic emblems as well as anthropomorphic figures of Siva. Among the various anthropomorphic figures of Siva, both single and composite, Dacca Museum has some interesting varieties, representing both of his *saumya* and *ugra* aspects, such as, Siva-Nataraja, Uma-Mahesvara or Alinganamurti, Kalyana-Sundara, Aghora-Rudra, Vatuka-Bhairava etc.

This eastern region of Bengali-speaking delta seems to have evolved a peculiar ten or twelve-handed type of Siva-Nataraja, the Supreme Dancer, dancing on the back of a Bull, his mount. The Dacca Museum has a number of these images of Nataraja

Revanta from Vajrayogini, Dacca.

Nataraja from Sankarbandha, Dacca.

and they are indeed the unique possessions of the Museum. The ten-handed variety of black-stone from Sankarbandha, Dacca, 33″X 25″, is an admirable piece of sculpture (page 37). The *nagaloka* or the nether region is depicted at the bottom, where a number of *nagas*, *naginis* and *ganas* are carved, some praying and some dancing. Above this, on the right and the left sides are two principal attendants—Ganga and Gauri—the two wives of Siva—respectively on a dolphin and a lion. Between them the Bull is shown dancing in ecstatic joy and looking wistfully up at the face of its Lord, who is deep in the joys of *Tandava* dance. All the principal deities with some other figures are shown round above the central figure. The god has ten hands. The *khadga* (sword), the *sakti* (spear), the *danda* (staff) and the *trisula* (trident) can be easily recognised in the four right hands of the god. In the left hands, the *khetaka* (shield) and the *naga* (snake) can be recognised. The other two hands are broken. The two normal hands that beautifully depicted the rythm of the dance, are also unfortunately damaged. The god has a serpent as his *upavita*. The human bust of this serpent is shown on the left shoulder of the god, keeping time with two hands. The rythmic grace, accompanied with intense activity, has been very skillfully portrayed in this 11-12th century A.D. unique sculpture.

The Museum has also a twelve-handed image of Nataraja. The image from Rampal, Dacca, 31″ X 14½″, is made of black stone (page 39). The two normal hands hold the *vina* across the breast, two hands are shown marking time *(karatala)* over the *jata* crest of the god, and another two hold the *naga* (serpent) as canopy, catching him by the head and the tail and over which different deities can be seen. The remaining three right hands have the

Nataraja from Rampal Dacca.

(b) Alingana-murti from Jethagram, Comilla.

(a) Kalyana-Sundara from Sankarbandha, Dacca.

rosary, the kettle-drum and the *abhaya* (protection) ; the three left hands have the trident, the snake and the pot (*kamandalu*). The ecstatic Bull is very well executed. But unfortunately the upper part of the *vina*, the left hand holding the *vina* and the garland are all now broken.

The next type of composite Siva icons of which there are quite a few in the Museum is the Uma-Mahesvara-murti or commonly known as Alingana-murti (page 40) There are images made of both black stone and bronze. In a typical image the god is ordinarily represented sitting on a lotus with the pendant right leg resting on a lotus or on the back of the Bull placed below. His wife Uma sits on his left thigh. Her left leg hangs out and is placed similarly on a lotus or on the back of her vehicle Lion. The god and the goddess are represented as embracing each other. At the top section of the *prabhavali* there is often depicted a parasol which is again flanked by Ganesa and Kartikeya.

The Museum has a unique *Vaivahika* or Kalyana-Sundara type of composite Saiva image, 28" X 15", from Sankarbandha, Dacca, made of black stone (page 40). This is the marriage-scene of Siva and Parvati. The god Siva stands in the middle with the *trisula* in his right hand. His left hand is free and rests on a raised support with palm inwards. He wears a *jatamukuta* and is festively dressed and ornamented. The goddess is represented as a maiden with well-developed bust, her head resting against the abdomen of the god. She has a casket in her right hand and a metallic round mirror with a handle, in her left. The Bull of Siva is depicted on the right of the couple ; Gauri's Lion is placed to the left. The image depicts quite a large gathering of gods and demigods in relief, who have gathered

(a) Aghora from Vikramapur, Dacca.

(b) Chamunda from Rampal, Dacca.

(a) Ganapati from Dhanuka, Faridpur.

(b) Nandi from Deobhog, Faridpur.

all round the couple on this auspicious ceremony. The whole of the *prabhavali* is carved into eleven tiers or compartments by thick horizontal up-raised lines, and in each tier different attendant deities and emblems are depicted.

The Dacca Museum Aghora image is an excellent example of the *ugra* type of Siva (page 42). The black stone image of 11th century A.D., 37″ X 20″, has been obtained from Vikramapur, Dacca. The god is standing in the *alidha* posture with his legs planted on nude human and demonical figures, on a pedestal composed of nine skulls, each arranged pyramidally in groups of three. To the right and left of this pedestal a jackal and a vulture are shown feasting on carrion. The Bull, carved between the legs of the deity, is looking up towards him. The eight hands of the god hold *damaru, sula*—piercing the breast of one of the prostrate figures, *Sara*—being drawn from the quiver at his back, *khadga, khetaka, dhanu, kapala* and *ghanta*. Two attendants holding *kartri* and *kapala* in their hands are shown one on either side of the deity, the fierce look of whose face has been heightened by the teeth protruding from the lips parted in a weird smile.

Intimately associated with Saiva icons are the images of Ganapati, Kartikeya and Nandi. Dacca Museum has several black stone images of Ganapati belonging to 10-12th century A. D. There is a small but beautiful single image of Kartikeya made of bronze of c. 7th century A. D.

A massive 8th century A.D. Nandi Bull, the vehicle of Siva, is represented in black stone (page 43). It is about 20 maunds in weight, 42″ X 36″ in size and obtained from Deobhog, Faridpur. The hump of the Bull is encircled by two garlands, and an

Sadyojata from Dinajpur.

Gauri from Sonarang, Dacca.

embroidered carpet covers the whole of the back. A pair of ropes go round the neck and a tiny bell is suspended from it. There are four holes in the pieces where the horns and ears should have been. A front leg is shown bent at the joint as if the Bull is about to rise.

Mention may be made here of a beautifully carved stone image of the controversial *Sadyojata* or the so-called 'Mother and Child,' believed to be just-born-aspect of Siva. The 12th century A.D. black stone image, 20" X 10", from Dinajpur (page 45), depicts a lady reclining on a couch with her head supported on her left hand which rests on a pillow. She holds a lotus in her right hand. A divine baby, with its feet resting against a lotus, lies on the left side of the lady. The legs of the lady are gracefully placed, bent one over the other. An attendant maid is shampooing the left leg of the lady. Images of Ganesa, Kartikeya & Linga can be seen above the figure of the lady.

There are various forms of Devi images, both of *saumya* and *ugra* aspects, in the Museum belonging to the cult of Sakti. The commonest variety of the standing four-armed Devi images of *saumya* aspects are fairly represented in the Museum, both in stone and metal, in the forms of Gauri, Parvati and Chandi. A 12th century A.D. image of Gauri (page 46) in bronze 7" X 2", from Sonarang, Dacca, is a finely preserved image, very well-executed and of considerable artistic merit. The godddess wear *jatamukuta* and has, clockwise, Fruit, Rosary, Trident and Vase in her four hands. The vehicle alligator is depicted near the lotus pedestal, to the proper left, moving towards proper right.

Of the *ugra* or terrific forms of Devi images, the Museum has several Mahisha-marddini figures of sand stone, black stone and metal.

(a) Kamboja Pillar from Bangarh, Dinajpur.

(b) Votive Stupa from Bangarh, Dinajpur.

Of the Matrika group of the Sakti icons, the Dacca Museum has some important representations. An image of Chamunda of *Dantura* class, in black stone, 26″ x 12″, from Dinajpur, can be mentioned. The figure with an emaciated body and sunken belly seated in a peculiar posture with a hand on her knee is interesting. The Chamunda in greyish-black stone of the *Siddha-Yogesvari* class, 30″ x 17″, from Rampal, Dacca, is a remarkable sculpture (page 42). The twelve-armed goddess dances on the shoulders of a smiling plump boy whose right hand poses for *abhaya*. The goddess holds in her six right hands boon, knife, kettle-drum, one end of elephant skin, arrow and sword, while of the corresponding hands on the left, the finger of the front one is raised to the lips, and the rest carry bow, the other end of the elephant skin, skull, corpse and trident. The locks of the goddess are thrown up and snakes are peeping out from them. The goddess has a necklace of skulls and bones.

It is needless to say that the Museum has a large number of miscellaneous deities apart from all those described so far belonging to Brahmanical pantheon which can be mentioned only in a comprehensive work aimed at detailed study of the subject.

ARCHITECTURAL PIECES

Various architectural pieces belonging to the Bengal school of art, remarkable both for beauty and importance, have been preserved in the Dacca Museum. Specially significant are the pillars and door-frames made of varieties of stone as well as wood.

A profusely decorated pillar of black stone (page 48), 8′-4″ in height, originally pertaining to a Saivaite edifice built by a 'lord of Gauda' of Kamboja lineage is a great attraction indeed.

(a) Granite Pillar from Sonarang, Dacca.

(b) Wooden Pillars from Vikramapur, Dacca.

This inscribed pillar is dated in Saka era in chronograms equivalent to 966 A.D., and was discovered in the ruins of Bangarh, Dinajpur, wherefrom it was carried to the palace of Maharaja Ramnath of Dinajpur in the 18th century A.D. Ultimately it found its way to Dacca Museum. The base and the top are square but the shaft is dodecagonal. The base consists of a square section enclosing a richly ornamented vase out of which issues a luxuriant foliage that adorns the lower part of the base. At the bottom of the base are two centaur-upon-elephant figures, seated back to back at each corner. The bottom of the shaft on each face shows a lotus stem, alternated by a vertical creeper design, issuing out of the foliated ornament of the vase. Almost near the top, the shaft is encircled by a band consisting of a series of *kirtimukhas*, from the mouths of which hang down elegant beaded loops with intervening tasselled beaded cords supporting a bell. The capital is made up of a 'compressed vase', indented like a *amalaka-sila*, the base of which shows rich arabesque work on each side. By the richness of its decoration and on account of its association with an historical inscription, this pillar stands out as a prominent landmark.

Leaving aside the aspect of profuse decoration, if only massiveness is concerned, Dacca Museum can well be proud of several other pillars of stone. One of them is a monolithic pillar of granite, 17'-4½" in height, from the Deul of Sonarang, Dacca (page 50). It is square at the base and tapers towards the top, where it is again square, but of reduced size. The shaft is octagonal and is decorated at its two ends by plain rectangular and triangular arabesques, ending in two raised rings.

There are also a number of decorated wooden pillars of 12th century A.D., all of them obtained from Vikramapur, Dacca (page 50).

They are richly carved, particularly in the bases, where interesting scenes are depicted in relief, such as, ladies shooting at the bird with bow and arrow, dancing figure of an ornamented lady, a goddess fighting a demon, dejected sitting figure of a princely youth etc.

But probably the most important architectural members in the Museum are two pairs of black stone door-frames, apparently of temples, from Dinajpur of c. 10-11th century A.D. Each one consists of a pair of upright jambs capped by a lintel. Originally the door-frames were said to be located in the ruins of Bangarh, Dinajpur. But, like the Kamboja pillar, they travelled to the palace of Maharaja of Dinajpur and ultimately to Dacca Museum. The undoubtedly superior of them is the *Naga-Darwaza*, the serpent gate-way, an enormous door-frame, 9′-7″ high and 7′ wide (page 53). The jambs exhibit several vertical bands alternated with low recesses. They are decorated with different patterns and this scheme of decoration is continued horizontally on the lintel. At the bottom towards the inner edge of each jamb is an ornamental niche with a trefoil arch containing the figure of a goddess in *tribhanga* pose, probably Ganga, standing on a dolphin in the right niche, and Jamuna, standing on a tortoise in the left niche, respectively. Over this niche run three vertical bands which, from the inner edge, consist of a meandering creeper accompanied by a row of lotus petal, the body of a snake with prominent scales against a pilaster and small offset ornamented with rosettes. The next band consists of a vertical row of super-imposed niches, alternately square and trefoiled, at the bottom of which is a *dvarapala*, seated in a peculiar posture with the lower end of his jaw resting on a staff held by both of his hands. The outer-

'*Naga Darwaza*' from Bangarh, Dinajpur.

Wooden Capital from Sonarang, Dacca.

most band consists of a tall slender pilaster accompanied by an arabesque on the back of a squatting *gana*, with a demon-like distorted face. The bodies of the snakes are continued in the lintel over which are carved seven miniature temples with pyramidal roofs and columned frontage. Below them are the figures of four *naginis*, a pair in the centre and one at each end. The figures at the ends are holding their shawls over their heads with their hands in the fashion of dancing. The fine execution and the chest decorative patterns make the piece one of the best specimens of door-frames ever manufactured of stone.

A number of other architectural members may briefly be mentioned, such as, a railing of carved out black stone with panels fitted with double-sided deities, structural piece of red sand-stone carved with unusually big lotus and several *chaityas* in miniature made of stone. The unique inscribed one, 45" high, an exceptionally rare type of *chaitya*, has been obtained from Dinajpur palace (page 48). It is of c. 11th century A.D. In shape it is quite different from the ordinary type of *chaityas* or votive stupas to be found in north-eastern part of the Sub-continent. In fact it is a miniature temple carved out of a single block of greyish black stone. It consists of a perpendicular *garbhagriha* with a sculptured trefoil niche on each face, raised over a cruciform basement with several mouldings, and capped by the curvilinear *sikhara*, gradually sloping inwards, over which rests the *amalaka* on a narrow neck. The niches contain four standing figures of Buddha representing four of the chief incidents of his life. The sharp edges are rigidly maintained and a cornice of two courses demarcates the *sikhara* from the cella of the *garbhagriha*.

Besides, huge block of sand-stone cut into steps to be used as door-sill, quarry-dressed black stone showing stages of stone-carving, broken shafts of octagonal granite pillars, image-rests and ornamented bricks which once decorated temples or shrines, both of ancient and mediaeval periods, can be seen in the Museum.

Lastly, mention should be made of the fact that apart from the artistic or iconographic interest in them, the sculptures and architectural pieces in the Dacca Museum are indeed important sources of historical information, for many an item bear unique inscriptions without which part of the history of this region would have remained a guess-work.

Printed by
A.K.M. ABDUL HAI
at
ASIATIC PRESS
4, ZINDABAHAR 3RD. LANE, DACCA—1